

Songs for Heathen Yuletide

Book I

By Winifred Hodge

This gathering of Yule songs is made on behalf of Haligwaerstow, Holyward Guild of the Anglo-Saxon Eldright, for the furtherance of all Heathen faith and worship.

The cassette tape of these songs (with or without accompanying booklet) can be ordered from *Winifred*

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1. The Holly and the Ivy: Song for Mothernight

(Traditional English carol, adapted by Winifred to be sung for the first day of Yuletide, Mothernight, December 20, in honor of our tribal mothers, disir, idesa, kinfylgja, and the other womanly wights with whom our folk is blessed!)

The holly and the ivy, when they are both full grown,
Of all the trees that are in the wood, the holly bears the crown.
The glowing of the Yule sun, and the running of the deer,
The blowing of the winter winds: call our Heathen Mothers near!

The holly bears a blossom, white as lily flower,
Our Mothers bear their babies dear, come to their living hour.
The glowing of the Yule sun, and the running of the deer,
The blowing of the winter winds: call our Heathen Mothers near!

The holly bears a berry, as red as any blood,
And ghostly Mothers come in dreams, to speak their kinfolk's good.
The glowing of the Yule sun, and the running of the deer,
The blowing of the winter winds: call our Heathen Mothers near!

The holly bears a prickle, as sharp as any thorn,
Of Heathen Mothers, wise and strong, our folk of old was born.
The glowing of the Yule sun, and the running of the deer,
The blowing of the winter winds: call our Heathen Mothers near!

The holly bears a ruddy bark, bitter as green gall,
Now Heathen Mothers stand by us, give rede and ward to all!
The glowing of the Yule sun, and the running of the deer,
The blowing of the winter winds: call our Heathen Mothers near!

The holly and the ivy, when they are both full grown,
Of all the trees that are in the wood, the holly bears the crown.
The glowing of the Yule sun, and the running of the deer,
The blowing of the winter winds: call our Heathen Mothers near!

2. Sunwheel

(This song is for celebrating both Yule and Litha, Midwinter & Midsummer. During Yuletide, it's suggested for celebrating the solstice day--December 21 or 22, depending on the year.)

O Sunwheel bright, the Sunwheel's flame
Rolls down the hills where Gods once came.
They come again, their mighty strides
Draw us, their folk, close to their sides.
Come one, come all, unto the call,
Come Gods, come Goddesses and folk, all!

O Sunwheel clear, your burning might
Has marked our deepest wisdom-sight.
Midwinter, midsummer, gladness & tears:
You turn the corners of all our years.
Come one, come all, unto the call,
Come Gods, come Goddesses and folk, all!

O Sunwheel shining, flame of our soul,
Now through your burning we are made whole.
The needfire's smoke of summer does heal,
While Yule log's blessing brings us weal.
Come one, come all, unto the call,
Come Gods, come Goddesses and folk, all!

O Sunwheel spinning, Sunna's might,
Thor's whirling Hammer, Gungnir's flight,
>From Freya's glowing Brisingamen,
Your main flows out, you draw main in.
Come one, come all, unto the call,
Come Gods, come Goddesses and folk, all!

O Sunwheel golden, strength of the land,
Mark earth and sky with your blazing brand!
Rune of giving, sigil of might:
Your power shines holy in Heathen sight!
Come one, come all, unto the call,
Come Gods, come Goddesses and folk, all!

(Words: Winifred. Tune: Traditional English "Sussex Carol.")

3. Gods Bless You, Merry Heathen Folk!

Gods bless you, merry Heathen folk
With luck & health & weal!
Remember all your forebears dear
With horns of Yuletide ale!
Call out your boast, lay orlay bright
That well the Norns may deal!
For our Gods now have called to us--have called, heart to heart,
For our Gods have spoken deep within our souls.

Bright Yrminsul, the Yuletide Tree
Roots deep within the Well,
The Worldtree arches overhead,
Its age no one can tell.
The ancients whisper in our ears:
We dream beneath their spell--
For our Gods now have called to us--have called, heart to heart,
For our Gods have spoken deep within our souls.

Between time past and time to come
A shining bridge is spun
Of lore and love and faithfulness,
All that our deeds have won.
Roll up your sleeve, reach out your hand:
Our work is just begun--
For our Gods now have called to us--have called, heart to heart,
For our Gods have spoken deep within our souls.

Glad Yuletide now we bid you all
With horns of flowing mead!
Bright Yuletide feast in Heathen halls
Shall make us glad indeed!
With frith and faith and wisdom's deeds
We plant the glowing seed--
For our Gods now have called to us--have called, heart to heart,
For our Gods have spoken deep within our souls.

(Words: Winifred. Tune: (guess what!)"God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen!")

4. Yule Feasting Song

(A light-hearted feasting song that will go down especially well with folk and Gods after several well-served rounds of blot or sumble!)

Ingvi-Frey, the King of Bliss,
Lord of love and gladness,
Giver of the harvest gifts,
Let him banish sadness!

Freya, golden Vanadis,
Mighty Queen of magic!
Join us for our Yuletide feast,
Share our fun and frolic!

Mighty Thor the Thunder-God,
Midgard's great defender!
Redbeard, share our meat and mead,
Lest you grow too slender!

Sif the shining Harvest Queen,
Thor's beloved helpmate,
Thrudheim's gracious chatelaine,
Bless us as we fill our plates!

Woden, Wish-God, wisdom's Lord,
Wod and wonder-bringer,
Tell us of your treasure-hoard,
Give holy mead to singers!

Frigga, hearth and home's bright core,
Giver of life's blessings!
Keeper of the secret lore,
Including lore of dressing!

Chorus: Hail him now and give him thanks,
Ask him for his blessing!
Always give back gift for gift:
Let not friendship lessen!

Chorus: Hail her now and give her thanks,
Ask her for her blessing!
Always give back gift for gift:
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(Words: Winifred. Tune: "Good King Wenceslas")

5. Boar's Head Carol

(Traditional medieval English carol, words adapted by Winifred. Though the original carol is supposedly Christian and has lines in Latin...with the focus on the Boar and the mention of the King of Bliss, one really wonders who the song was originally intended for!)

The boar's head in hand bear I,
Bedecked with bay and rosemary,
And I bid you good Heathens be merry,
Together on this holy day!

Chorus:
Odin, Thor and Ingvi-Frey,
Frigga, Freya bless this day!

The boar's head, as I understand,
Is the fairest dish in all the land,
When thus bedecked with a gay garland,
Presented on this holy day!

Chorus:
Odin, Thor and Ingvi-Frey,
Frigga, Freya bless this day!

The steward hath provided this,
In honor of the King of Bliss,
Who on this day to be feasted is!
Now glad betide Frey's holy day!

Chorus:
Odin, Thor and Ingvi-Frey,
Frigga, Freya bless this day!

6. O Tannenbaum

(Traditional German song honoring the fir tree.)

O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
Wie treu sind deine Blätter!
Du grünst nicht nur zur Sommerzeit,
Nein, auch im Winter wenn es schneit!
O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
Wie treu sind deine Blätter!

O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
Du kannst mir sehr gefallen!
Wie oft hat nicht zur Weihnachtszeit
Ein Baum von dir mich hoch erfreut!
O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
Du kannst mir sehr gefallen!

O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
Dein Kleid soll mich was lehren!
Die Hoffnung und Beständigkeit
Gibt Trost und Kraft zur aller Zeit!
O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
Dein Kleid soll mich was lehren!

Literal (not poetic) translation:

O Fir Tree, O Fir Tree,
How true are your leaves!
You're green not only summertime,
But also winter, when it snows!
O Fir Tree, O Fir Tree,
How true are your leaves!

O Fir Tree, O Fir Tree,
You can please me greatly!
How oft has not on Holy Night
A tree of yours brought me delight!
O Fir Tree, O Fir Tree,
You can please me greatly!

O Fir Tree, O Fir Tree,
Your dress shall teach me something!
The hope and steadfastness
Give comfort and strength for every time!
O Fir Tree, O Fir Tree,
Your dress shall teach me something!

7. Ullr's Yule Gift

Forth we go
Into the driving snow!
Yule tree seeking, Yule tree lofty,
Forth we go!
Yule log's might and main we'll bring,
With Yuletide blessing, needles green,
Into the fire's glow.

Cold winds blow,
Sun is sinking fast!
Winds are whipping round our heads,
Cold winds blow!
So our hearts are filled with dread:
Where are we now? Naught can we see Within the
blowing snow.

Look you there--
Footprints in the snow!
Criss-cross pattern, snowshoe-sign,
Look you there!
Mighty strides a man is taking
Forth into the forest deep,
His steps will show us where.

Round about,
Snowshoe tread is there,
Ringed around a mighty tree!
Round about,
Ullr's marked his gift to us!
So let us take it, hasten home,
Give thanks with a glad shout!

Well we know
Now our pathway home!
Snowshoes' shining trail we see!
Well we know
Ullr's path; our Winter God
Gives us his blessing, we are glad:
Let us invite him home!

Home we go,
Out of the driving snow!
Yule tree sought we, Yule tree bear we!
Home we go,
Yule log's might and main we bring
With Ullr's blessing: let us sing
Around the fire's glow!

(Words: Winifred. The tune is from a 16th-century Latin carol,
"Psallite Unigenito," that was taken from an earlier German tune)

8. Deck the Hall

(Traditional English carol; the tune is originally Welsh.)

Deck the hall with boughs of holly, Fa la la la la, la la la
la!
Tis the season to be jolly, Fa la la la la, la la la la!
Don we now our gay apparel, Fa la la la, la la la la la!
Troll the ancient Yuletide carol, Fa la la la la, la la la la!

See the blazing Yule before us, Fa la la la la, la la la la!
Strike the harp and join the chorus, Fa la la la la, la la la
la!
Follow me in merry measure, Fa la la la, la la la la la!
While I tell of Yuletide treasure, Fa la la la la, la la la la!

Fast away the old year passes, Fa la la la la, la la la la!
Hail the new, ye lads and lasses, Fa la la la la, la la la la!
Sing we joyous all together, Fa la la, la la la la la la!
Heedless of the wind and weather, Fa la la la la, la la la
la!

9. Yrminsul

(The music is from a pre-fifteenth-century German tune now used for the carol "Lo How a Rose." Words in German and English by Winifred. Be aware that the English and German verses are of similar meaning but not word-for-word translations.)

Da ist einen Baum entsprungen, aus einem Gaffen karg,
Wie uns die Alten sunen, von zauberhafter Art.
Er reicht von Himmelfund,
Noch bis die tiefste Quelle: der ganze Welt der Grund.

Der Baum worum ich singe, davon die Seherin sagt,
Als Yrminsul geehrt wurd', die Ernte alter Tat,
Hält jetzt noch Heil und Rat;
Aus Kerne Yrminsuls hin, erleuchtet das Julrad.

There is a Tree grown mighty, from out a bleak gap
sprung,
Of kind and form most wondrous, as those of old have
sung.
>From highest heaven unfurled,
Rooted in deepest lifespings: foundation of the World.

The Tree of which I sing now, as spoke the Seeress' rede,
As Yrminsul was honored, harvest of ancient deed,
Holds yet its holy truth;
>From deep within its being, the Yulewheel shining
forth.

Der Baum worum ich singe, davon die Seherin sagt,
Als Yrminsul geehrt wurd', die Ernte alter Tat.
Hält jetzt noch Heil und Rat;
Aus Kerne Yrminsuls hin, erleuchtet das Julrad.

Wassailing Songs

Following are three traditional English "wassailing" songs to wrap up our Yuletide concert! The word "wassail" is a contraction of the Old English *waes hael*, and refers to the practice of wishing someone good health and wellbeing, while drinking and perhaps pouring a blot of drink to seal the wish. Wassailing was done especially during Yuletide, and included the farm animals, the orchard trees and any other special trees. Later the custom extended to one's social superiors and fellow villagers, with wassail songs sung as young folks "went wassailing," singing for good luck and blessings around the village and collecting drink, food, and/or money at Yuletide. It was (still is) sort of a combination of our Christmas caroling and Halloween practices in this country, all rolled up into one occasion. In the "Gloucestershire Wassail," you can see how the practice of wassailing the farm animals was retained. In all the songs, the practice of wassailing one's social superiors is shown, since they were the ones expected to contribute the most money, drink, and/or food to the wassailers. In both the "Gloucestershire Wassail" and "We Wish You a Glad Yuletide," you can see a trace of a threat, however humorous, if the person being wassailed does not "cough up the goods," which is reminiscent of old Halloween practices.

10. Wassail Song

(English traditional. Words slightly adapted by Winifred.
Recommended for singing on New Year's Eve.)

Here we come a-wassailing among the leaves so green,
Here we go a-wandering, so fair to be seen!
Love and joy come to you, and to you good wassail,
too,
All Gods bless you and send you a happy New Year,
All Gods send you a happy New Year!

We are not daily beggars that roam from door to door,
But we're your Heathen neighbors whom you have seen
before.
Love and joy come to you, and to you good wassail,
too,
All Gods bless you and send you a happy New Year,
All Gods send you a happy New Year!

Gods bless the master of this house, likewise the mistress
too,
And all the little children that round the table go!
Love and joy come to you, and to you good wassail,
too,
All Gods bless you and send you a happy New Year,
All Gods send you a happy New Year!

Good master and good mistress, while you're sitting by
the fire,
Pray think of us poor Heathens who're wandering in the
mire!
Love and joy come to you, and to you good wassail,
too,
All Gods bless you and send you a happy New Year,
All Gods send you a happy New Year!

11. Gloucestershire Wassail

(Cherry and Dobbin in this song are a team of plough-horses; Broad May, Fillpail and Colly are milch cows. I changed the words "our master" to "our neighbor" in this version, in each verse. Gloucestershire is pronounced "Gluster-sheer." Words slightly adapted by Winifred.)

Wassail, wassail all over the town!
Our bread it is white and our ale it is brown!
Our bowl it is made of the white maple tree;
With a wassailing bowl we'll drink unto thee!

So here is to Cherry and to his right cheek,
The Gods send our neighbor a good piece of beef,
And a good piece of beef, that may we all see,
With a wassailing bowl we'll drink unto thee!

So here is to Dobbin and to his right eye,
The Gods send our neighbor a good Yuletide pie,
And a good Yuletide pie, that may we all see,
With a wassailing bowl we'll drink unto thee!

So here's to Broad May and to her broad horn,,
The Gods send our neighbor a good crop of corn,
And a good crop of corn, that may we all see,
With a wassailing bowl we'll drink unto thee!

So here is to Fillpail and to her left ear,
The Gods send our neighbor a happy New Year,
And a happy New Year, that may we all see,
With a wassailing bowl we'll drink unto thee!

So here is to Colly and to her long tail,
The Gods send our neighbor you never may fail!
A bowl of strong beer, we pray you draw near,
And our jolly wassailing again you shall hear!

Come, butler, come fill us a bowl of the best,
Then we hope that your soul in Valhalla will rest;
But if you do draw us a bowl of the small,
Then the Wolf take butler, bowl and all!

12. We Wish You a Glad Yuletide!

(Words slightly adapted by Winifred.)

We wish you a glad Yuletide, we wish you a glad
Yuletide,
We wish you a glad Yuletide, and a happy New Year!
Yule blessings we bring to you and your kin,
We wish you a glad Yuletide, and a happy New Year!

We all want some figgy pudding, we all want some figgy
pudding,
We all want some figgy pudding, and a cup of good
cheer!

We won't go until we get some, we won't go until we get
some,
We won't go until we get some, so bring it out here!

We wish you a glad Yuletide, we wish you a glad
Yuletide,
We wish you a glad Yuletide, and a happy New Year!
Yule blessings we bring to you and your kin,
We wish you a glad Yuletide, and a happy New Year!

...and glad Yule and happy New Year to you, one and all, from
Winifred!